

The Missouri Overweight and Obesity Observer

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

A compilation of the latest news relating to overweight and obesity from around the state, nation and world.

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U.S. task force revisits need for obesity screening

Although obesity may seem to be an obvious condition, only 42 percent of obese U.S. adults report that health care professionals have advised them to lose weight. According to a recent report from the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as far back as 1996, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended periodic height and weight measurement for patients. Because of increased obesity prevalence, therapeutic changes, and accumulating evidence of associated health risk, this recommendation is being updated. The Research Triangle Institute–University of North Carolina Evidence-based Practice Center developed a systematic review of evidence to assist the task force in this process.

According to the *Annals* report, medical literature was reviewed to determine the effectiveness of adult obesity screening—the conscious measurement of weight status to clinically address body weight—and treatment. It was concluded: “Counseling and pharmacotherapy can promote modest sustained weight loss, improving clinical outcomes. Pharmacotherapy appears safe in the short term; long-term safety has not been as strongly established. In selected patients, surgery promotes large amounts of weight loss with rare but sometimes severe complications.”

For full story, go to: www.annals.org/cgi/content/full/139/11/933

Study focuses on link between calcium, weight loss

Researchers are investigating the link between calcium and weight loss as a way to help prevent women from gaining too much weight when pregnant, a trend that often marks the beginning of obesity. Calcium intake has previously been linked to lower weight in girls and may help pregnant

women in controlling weight gain during pregnancy and loss in postpartum, according to a report online at NutraIngredients.com.

The researchers at Oregon Health and Science University have begun a clinical trial to investigate the effects of a calcium supplement (1200 milligrams of elemental calcium) on weight gain and loss. Jane Harrison-Hohner, nurse practitioner and study coordinator, indicated that pregnancy was a good time to test the effects of calcium on weight regulation.

“There are many positive aspects to increasing calcium consumption during pregnancy,” she was quoted as saying. “It would be great if such a simple and safe intervention was able to help women contend with body weight issues as well as provide for the child's needs.” According to the online report, recent surveys show that people who consume the lowest range of calcium consumption are six times more likely to be overweight than those in the highest range.

For full story, go to: www.nutraingredients.com/news/news.asp?id=8094

European study to focus on early childhood diet

In order to stem the growing rate of obesity in Europe, a major trial is being conducted on children to examine how early childhood diet can reduce the risk of obesity in later life. A recent article featured on NutraIngredients.com says the findings could lead to development of new infant foods and reformulating of protein contents. Many researchers suspect the foods a baby is fed have lasting, programming effect on later obesity risk. Many current studies indicate that infants fed formula milk are more likely to become obese than breastfed infants. However, the article points to two studies published recently that challenge that theory. The project, according to the report,

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is designed to promote the benefits of breast-feeding. It is also expected to break new ground in providing data for producing infant formula with adequate protein.

For full story, go to: www.nutraingredients.com/news/news.asp?id=8002

Incidence of severe obesity up sharply in U.S. population

Severe obesity, still a relatively rare condition, has been rising sharply in the U.S. over the past couple of decades. According to a Washington Post report recently, the number of cases of severe obesity has quadrupled since 1986. That is twice as fast as the rise of milder obesity, the researchers at the Rand Corporation in California revealed.

The proportion of severe obesity has jumped from one in 200 in 1986 to five in 200 in 2000. "I call this the hidden part of the obesity epidemic," said Rand's Roland Sturm, who conducted the research. "We've heard so much about obesity and heard predictions about how obesity will increase health care costs. But that is a severe underestimate because none have taken into account severe obesity." He explained that the costs will be greater since the severely obese develop health problems sooner.

For full story, go to: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21367-2003Oct13.html

Calorie-dense food biggest threat to gaining weight

High calorie foods prompt bigger portions but offer less satisfaction, according to a new study from Penn State. "Portion size alone increased calorie intake by 20 percent," said Tanja Kral, doctoral candidate in nutritional sciences who conducted the study as part of her dissertation. "Calorie density alone increased intake by 26 percent. Together, portion size and calorie density increased calorie intake by 56 percent."

The study, which was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Disease, was the first to focus on the combined effects of

both portion size and calorie density or the calories per ounce. "Even though the study participants consumed 221 fewer calories when offered a smaller meal of lower calorie density, they felt just as full and satisfied as when they had consumed a larger meal of higher calorie density," Kral added.

For full story, go to: www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-10/ps-dtb101303.php

More dietary fiber equals less weight gain, study shows

A study of middle-aged women conducted over a period of 12 years revealed that those who consumed more whole grains consistently weighed less than did women who consumed less whole grains, according to a report in the November 2003 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Those women in the study with the greatest increase in intake of dietary fiber gained an average of 1.52 kg less than did those with the smallest increase in intake of dietary fiber. This, according to the report, indicates the importance of distinguishing whole-grain products from refined-grain products when considering weight control.

For full story, go to: www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/78/5/920

Insurance, drug access hinges on calling obesity a disease

The growth in the incidence of obesity has given rise to a debate among scientists, advocacy groups, federal agencies, insurance companies and drug makers on whether or not obesity should be considered a disease. Such a declaration could have an impact on insurance coverage to millions who need treatment for weight problems and could possibly speed the approval of new diet drugs, according to a recent report in The Washington Post.

Those in favor of calling it a disease argue that a "new scientific understanding has clearly established that obesity is a discrete medical condition that independently affects health." Opponents contend that obesity is more akin to high cholesterol or cigarette smoking — a risk factor that predisposes someone to illness but is not an ailment in itself, such as lung cancer or heart disease.

For full story, go to: www.msnbc.com/news/991427.asp?0cv=HB10